

## State Commission

Serve Wisconsin manages a portfolio of 25 AmeriCorps State programs with 885 AmeriCorps members serving in 50 counties addressing critical needs in education, health, environment, economic opportunity, disasters, and capacity building. AmeriCorps program results from last year included 5,329 students improving their academics and 160 veterans and their family members receiving supportive assistance. AmeriCorps members leveraged more than 17,000 volunteers who contributed more than 200,000 hours of service, a value of \$4.5 million to Wisconsin communities. In 2015, Serve Wisconsin coordinated a Financial and Grants Management Institute that attracted AmeriCorps program and State Commission staff from 26 states for a high-level training on crucial aspects of grant management. Serve Wisconsin also launched an InterCorps Council, a peer-led organization of national service participants working to strengthen national service in Wisconsin. A state-wide swearing-in ceremony was held in October, with more than 475 AmeriCorps State, National, VISTA and NCCC members attending and participating in a meal packing service project that resulted in 111,936 meals being donated to a local food bank.

## AmeriCorps State

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee engages 38 AmeriCorps members who serve as tutors in the SPARK Early Literacy program. SPARK combines one-on-one tutoring with parent engagement and after-school programming to engage the whole child and family. The cost effectiveness of AmeriCorps members serving allows SPARK to reach more struggling youth. The tutors are trained and supervised by certified teachers. SPARK uses parent liaisons to promote literacy in the home and address fundamental reasons that children lag in literacy development. An independent, randomized control trial evaluation of the program confirmed that SPARK had statistically significant, positive impacts on overall reading achievement and literacy development. The impact was larger for students who started with more need for literacy instruction. The study also found that family engagement affected school attendance – participants were absent from school less often and were 27 percent less likely to be chronically absent. Given the large network of Boys & Girls Clubs across the U.S., the results suggest SPARK has potential to benefit a large number of students and families.

A college degree is one of the most promising pathways out of poverty, yet in 2015, only one low-income student earned a college degree for every nine affluent students. College Possible Milwaukee is changing the futures of capable, low-income students by helping them become college graduates. The program's motivated and idealistic AmeriCorps members deliver intensive near-peer coaching to low-income students. They prepare students to take the ACT, help with college applications and financial aid issues, guide students through college transition, and support students all the way through to a college degree. College Possible Milwaukee AmeriCorps members served nearly 4,000 students in 2014-15 and 96 percent of those students earned admission to college, a success rate that is amongst the best in the nation. College Possible levels the playing field for the students it serves: they are five times more likely to graduate from college than their low-income peers and earn college degrees at the same rate as students of all incomes. College Possible operates at one-seventh the cost of similar federally-funded programs.

## AmeriCorps National

City Year Milwaukee AmeriCorps engages 100 AmeriCorps members who serve full-time at 11 schools, helping more than 6,600 students at greatest risk of dropping out. AmeriCorps members serve alongside teachers, using research-based tools to improve students' attendance, behavior, and performance in math and English. The members also lead afterschool programs and school-wide initiatives to improve school culture. Thanks to the members' service, 73 percent of students tutored by City Year Milwaukee AmeriCorps members improved their math assessment scores from fall to spring, 98 percent of teachers agree that City Year AmeriCorps members serve as positive role models, and 100 percent of principals are satisfied with the overall experience of working with City Year.

The Tribal AmeriCorps Program, a partnership with the Tribal State Collaboration for Positive Change and Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community, engaged 12 AmeriCorps members serving eight tribal coalitions this year. It has served its communities since 2009. The AmeriCorps members ran initiatives on youth engagement, prescription drug abuse prevention, parent networks, and town hall meetings and policy initiatives on alcohol and other drug abuse issues. They hosted the "Parents Who Host Lose The Most" public awareness campaign and worked with local county officials fund allocation for prevention initiatives. This year, the members served 1,598 people, gave 18,645 hours of service valued at \$412,800, and have become leaders in tribal coalitions and host sites. They recruited 278 volunteers who gave 3,612 hours of service valued at \$79,969. Since 2010, 42 members have provided 101,764 hours of service to coalitions and host sites and have served 7,408 people. They have recruited 410 volunteers who have given 4,754 hours of service at a value to the Tribes of \$2,358,314.

Youth Volunteer Corps engages three AmeriCorps members serving Racine. Last year, these members engaged 187 youth, including 26 disadvantaged youth, in 2,528 hours of service. The youth volunteers participated in 48 service projects for 15 local agencies, including Love Inc., River Bend Nature Center, and The Volunteer Center.

## AmeriCorps VISTA

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction started an AmeriCorps VISTA project in 2014 aimed at building the capacity of Cooperative Education Service Agencies to support students experiencing homelessness and to build mentoring programs in districts to support the academic success of these students. Starting with two AmeriCorps VISTAs in 2014, the program has grown to five members serving four regions in Wisconsin. The first round of members served 83 school districts, completed 31 capacity building activities, and raised \$9,000 in in-kind resources. These activities included creating community resource guides and homeless awareness flyers and developing detailed asset maps and needs assessments for each community. The AmeriCorps VISTAs also planned trainings for “Homeless Liaisons” in each school, a first for each of these communities. To ensure sustainability, Homeless Liaisons were involved in planning and led the execution of the events. In the second year, this program has been expanded to two additional regions using the model developed in the first year. Second year projects are now developing a mentoring program to support homeless youth through their schools.

AmeriCorps VISTA Kayla Ludwigson is serving at St. Croix Valley Habitat for Humanity in Black River Falls. Kayla is serving as the affiliate's Outreach Coordinator, building capacity by developing and implementing outreach strategies that increase awareness of Habitat's programs throughout the community. One of those programs, A Brush with Kindness, inspires and engages community members to take action in revitalizing their neighborhoods. The program mobilizes community volunteers to perform repairs to existing homes – one home, one block, one neighborhood at a time. The repairs address poor structural conditions, safety, exterior repairs to roofs, doors, windows and special needs including wheelchair ramps, veteran assistance, and aging-in-place assistance. As a result of increased community outreach, Bob and Diane Olson were connected with the A Brush of Kindness program. Bob and Diane have lived in their home for 40 years. Recently, they have been struggling with expensive medical bills due to increased health challenges, affecting their ability to maintain their home and age in place. The Olson's repair project included scraping and painting the entire house, repairing the sidewalk and front steps, replacing unsafe stairways, replacing windows, and installing a new roof. These repairs increased the Olson's ability to age in place by increasing accessibility, addressing safety concerns, and improving energy efficiencies to reduce utility costs. To support the Olson's project, Kayla successfully secured a \$2,500 grant from Thrivent and \$500 from individual donors. She also recruited and coordinated community volunteers who served a total of 415 hours.

## AmeriCorps NCCC

The mission of the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust (OWLT) is to preserve water resources, natural areas, and working lands of Ozaukee and Washington Counties. This is achieved by monitoring conservation easements and purchasing and managing properties of high environmental significance within the two counties. An AmeriCorps NCCC team assisted OWLT in the spring of 2015 to restore their sites based on the organization's restoration plans. The team performed controlled burns on more than 50 acres of prairie grass and maintenance on half a mile of trail. The team also cut a new 400-plus foot hiking trail for Lac Lawrann Conservancy, which had been a planned project for more than 30 years. To assist with land maintenance, members spread 11 tons of gravel and mulch, constructed 80 feet of boardwalk, planted more than 300 trees, 50 shrubs and bushes, and potted 59 native plants. The team was able to replace 80 ceiling tiles and paint 1,400 square feet of the walls and ceilings at the Forest Beach Migratory Preserve. The service that the AmeriCorps team provided helped realign the organization's sites with strategic conservation goals, helping both the community and the environment.

With more than 16,000 Metro Milwaukee student visitors annually, Camp Whitcomb Mason is one of southeast Wisconsin's more utilized environmental educational resources. Students in Milwaukee central city and Waukesha need a better understanding of how the environment plays a critical role in shaping Wisconsin's history, the role it plays in their daily lives, and why the forest and the environment remain important to the state's economic, social, and environmental well-being. During the fall of 2014, an AmeriCorps NCCC team supported Camp Whitcomb Mason in their efforts to promote sustainability. Members felled, bucked, and limbed trees, removed underbrush, and laid mulch to restore a trail. Additionally, the team assisted with a weatherization and roofing project to prepare one facility for a harsh winter. Finally, the team filled in as camp counselors and chaperones for school-age children participating in tours and activities during one of their weeks on-site. The team's service will have a lasting impact on the camp, which has served countless individuals over the years and continues to hold a special place in many campers' hearts.

## Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

Vaydah, a two-year old at the Encompass Children's Center in Green Bay is in foster care because her mother is incarcerated. When Vaydah began childcare, she had great difficulty controlling herself. She threw tantrums, which included throwing herself on the floor, kicking, and screaming. She required one-on-one attention for the first few weeks. A Foster Grandparent serving at the center developed a close bond with her. Now Vaydah loves to hug and help – bringing tissue to those with runny noses, setting and clearing the table, and picking up toys without being asked. The Foster Grandparent is proud to be part of Vaydah's journey.

## Senior Corps RSVP

Since September, 2013, RSVP volunteer Nancy has provided weekly one-on-one reading tutoring for a student at Horning Middle School in Waukesha. The student is Hispanic, representing a growing population of Hispanic families in the city. The student has struggled with reading and comprehension, and does not have family members who are fluent in English to assist her with homework. Nancy's tutoring has provided a consistent level of support for the student, extending beyond the traditional school year through the summer months. The middle school reading specialist reports that the student is making measurable gains in her academic performance and is on track to be at grade level in reading for the start of high school.

## Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

Before physical and mental challenges took over Ellen Patterson's life, she had played musical instruments for years. Given her disabilities, she was not able to take lessons for a long time. When Ellen became a client at the Community Care Adult Day Care facility in Milwaukee, one of her goals was to take music lessons in one of the instruments she used to play. Stacie Schmidt, the Community Care Volunteer Station Supervisor and Shirley Harris-Waddles, a Senior Companion assigned to Community Care, made sure that would happen. Stacie found a piano class that Ellen could take. There was, however, another hurdle to overcome. Given her disabilities, Ellen could not go there alone. Shirley stepped in and agreed to accompany Ellen to her weekly lessons. She makes sure Ellen has the small fee she pays and is ready for her lesson every week. Music has returned to Ellen, and her passion has been rekindled and her life has changed because of it.

## Social Innovation Fund

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) transforms lives by using evidence to find what works and make it work for more people. The SIF Classic and SIF Pay for Success programs harness the expertise of grant-making intermediaries to identify, evaluate and expand effective nonprofits serving low-income communities across America. The SIF programs in the state focus primarily on food security, youth development and employment opportunities. The Social Innovation Fund is investing \$250,000 in expanding the impact of three nonprofits in Wisconsin.

## Volunteer Generation Fund

Serve Wisconsin is using its Volunteer Generation Fund grant to implement and expand the Service Enterprise Initiative in the state. Research from the TCC Group, Reimagining Service, and Deloitte demonstrates that organizations that fundamentally leverage volunteers and their skills across all levels of the organization to successfully deliver on their social mission are better led and managed, and are more adaptable, sustainable and better resourced, and deliver a 600 percent return on their investment in volunteer capacity. Through a partnership with the Nonprofit Center of Milwaukee, 15 nonprofit organizations in Milwaukee have completed the required Service Enterprise Diagnostic and 16 hours of training, and an additional six organizations have started the process. In just two years, this effort has resulted in seven – soon to be 10 – certified Service Enterprises in the Milwaukee area. Outreach to other communities has begun in order to expand the initiative statewide due to the overwhelmingly positive response in Milwaukee. This initiative is directly aligned with the State Service Plan, which is centered on increased volunteerism and service in Wisconsin.